

Pastor Kory's Page

Faith Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls, SD

December 13 & 14, 2014

The Forgotten Father of Christmas

Joseph's role in the "holy" family

In our men's Bible study this fall, we explored the legacies of several biblical fathers through the book *Courageous Fathers of the Bible* by seminary professor, Joel Biermann.

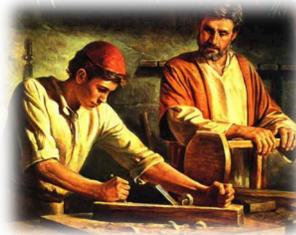
By and large, even the faithful fathers in Scripture still had their issues. Jesus' ancestors in the house of David certainly had theirs. Family troubles began already during David's reign. Like his father, Solomon was tempted by the many women in his life and led astray by their false worship. Solomon's son, Rehoboam, spurned his father's wisdom and presided over the division of the kingdom. The kings who followed persisted in unfaithfulness, and eventually, as Babylon conquered Jerusalem, David's dynasty became a dead stump (Isaiah 11:1). Jesus and His earthly stepfather, Joseph, were both descendants of those long-dead kings.

Joseph doesn't get a lot of attention in Scripture, and understandably so. After all, he was not Jesus' biological father, but His guardian, and the focus is rightly placed on Jesus Himself. Joseph was likely some years older than Mary. It's usually assumed that Joseph died sometime after the family's Passover pilgrimage (Luke 2:41-52) and before Jesus' ministry began when He was around thirty years old. As Jesus preaches His first "sermon" in Nazareth (based on this weekend's Old Testament reading from Isaiah 61), His neighbors still assume that He is merely Joseph's son (Luke 4:22).

Admittedly, we have only a small amount of detail about Joseph. In fact, none of Joseph's words were recorded for us. However, on the basis of Joseph's actions, we can still draw some helpful conclusions about him as a father.

Joseph was a good man. Unlike his royal ancestors, Joseph does not have any negative marks on his reputation. This does not mean that Joseph was without sin. He still needed the salvation provided by his son. Yet Joseph was also a faithful husband, a reliable tradesman, and an upright example for his children. Jesus was

submissive to His earthly parents (Luke 2:51) and while under their care, "increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man" (Luke 2:52). Joseph taught Jesus his trade (Mark 6:3) and also went on to have a large family (Mark 6:30).



Joseph was quietly humble. I bet you can think of men in your families who exhibit quiet strength. They don't say a lot, but when they do speak up, they mean what they say and you listen. Joseph seems like the kind of man who kept

his composure, but wasn't afraid to take action.

Joseph was obedient to the Lord. On four occasions, the Lord's angels instructed him through dreams, telling him to take Mary as his wife and to name her son, Jesus (Matt. 1:20-21); telling him to take his family and flee to Egypt (Matt 2:13); telling him to return home to Israel (Matt. 2:19); and telling him to beware of Herod's son in Judea (Matt. 2:22). In all these cases, Joseph obeyed without question.

Joseph was faithful. When considering how to respond to Mary's apparent infidelity, Joseph wanted to be faithful to God's law prohibiting a man from marrying an adulterous woman, yet Joseph also wanted to deal kindly and quietly with Mary (Matt. 2:19). Joseph later saw that Jesus' circumcision and Mary's purification happened on schedule (Luke 2:21-24). Once their family situation had settled down, they made annual pilgrimages from Nazareth to Jerusalem for the Passover (Luke 2:41). Apparently Joseph also instilled the custom of regular Sabbath worship (Luke 4:16).

Joseph was a protective husband and father. Joseph protected Mary from being potentially stoned to death for adultery. He shepherded his family safely to Egypt and eventually back home to Nazareth while steering clear of two ruthless kings.

Fathers set a tone for their families. Both during the action-packed years around the first Christmas, and during the normalcy of the years that followed, Joseph certainly did this for his family. May the Lord bless all Christian fathers with the courage, humility, and faithfulness of Joseph!